UNIVERSITY OF YORK

SENATE

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2015

Present: The Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Dr J Grenville
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor D Smith
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching & Learning), Professor J Robinson
Dean (Social Sciences), Professor S Bell
Dean (Sciences), Professor B Fulton
Dean (Arts & Humanities), Professor M Ormrod

Dr R Aitken
Professor J D’Amico
Professor E Annandale
Professor K Atkin
Professor M Bentley
Professor C Brown
Professor D Brown
Professor S Carroll
Professor B Chambers
Professor E Corrigan
Professors G Currie
Professor C Dytham
Professor M Festenstein
Professor C Fewster
Dr A Field
Professor R Godby
Professor M Goddard
Professor I Graham
Dr J de Groot
Dr T Helgason
Professor A Higson
Professor C Hunter

Professor R Jacobs
Professor A Jones
Mr Ben Leatham (SU President)
Professor P Linsley
Dr O Lisagor
Dr S Minta
Dr J Moir
Professor K Mumford
Professor R Sainsbury
Dr J Schofield
Professor T Sheldon
Dr S Smith
Professor Q Summerfield
Dr B Szczepek Reed
Professor R Taylor
Dr R Vann
Dr R Waites
Mr G Wall
Dr M White
Dr A Wood
Mr R Yates

In attendance: The Registrar and Secretary
The Academic Registrar
University Governance Officer, Dr P Evans
SU Academic Officer, Mr T Ron
Vice-Chancellor’s Executive Officer, Ms H Brian
Dean of Graduate Research School, Professor T Stoneham
Business Intelligence Development Manager, Mr A Knock (for M14-15/55)
HR Director, Mrs P Lofthouse (for M14-15/59)

Apologies for absence were received from Mr A Dennis (student rep), Mr F Hamza (student rep), Ms J Horvatic (GSA President), Mr A Martinez (student rep), Mr S Pullen (student rep), Professor L Stewart and Mr S Town.

Senate: 7 July 2015
14-15/53 Membership

On behalf of Senate, the Vice-Chancellor thanked those members who were attending their last meeting. Particular thanks were offered to Dr Jane Grenville for her considerable contribution to the work of Senate and the University during her tenure as Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

14-15/54 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 May 2015 were approved.

14-15/55 Analysis of Degree Outcomes

Further to M14-15/41 (Undergraduate Degree Attainment), Senate considered a statistical report on undergraduate degree classifications, postgraduate taught outcomes and postgraduate research submission rates (S.14-15/43).

Presenting the report, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (T&L) highlighted specific comments made by University Teaching Committee (UTC) in respect of:

- outlier departments as regards percentage of good degrees awarded (but acknowledging volatility of trends over several years);
- 87.8% of York PGT students achieving their course aim (i.e. an award at a level equal or greater to their study intention), with some outlier departments relative to the Russell Group and former 1994 Group;
- recommendation from the Graduate Research School Board that departments with a >15% PGR withdrawal rate be asked to look for correlations between qualifications on entry and withdrawal and, if found, review their admissions procedures;
- departments being asked to comment on the data via the Annual Programme Review (APR) process.

It was also reported that UTC was establishing a sub-group with the Business Intelligence Unit (BIU) to refine the analysis for future reporting and to agree possible triggers for corrective action.

During discussion the following comments were noted:

(a) Withdrawal rates for full-time doctoral study were notably higher among social science departments (20% overall). It was generally agreed that high PhD withdrawal rates in any department should be explored further, including with regard to the associated funding implications.
(b) In addition to the raw data, the new UTC sub-group would consider the possibilities for additional qualitative analysis of reasons for withdrawal, acknowledging that there was rarely a single straightforward reason for non-completion.

(c) The deeper analysis previously considered by Senate (M14-15/41 refers) had confirmed that gender was not an explanatory variable for degree outcome.

(d) When asking departments to comment on the undergraduate data, it might be useful to prompt them to consider specific factors (e.g. relating to admissions, assessment, NSS outcomes etc).

On behalf of Senate the Vice-Chancellor thanked the BIU for undertaking the data analysis, noting that maintenance of academic standards and grade inflation had become an issue of interest to government policy-makers, with likely implications for the sector (e.g. possible phased introduction of a GPA system to replace current degree classifications).

14-15/56 Academic Promotions Criteria

Further to M14-15/42 (Academic Promotions Criteria), Senate considered an updated draft of the revised academic promotions criteria (S.14-15/44).

Presenting the new criteria, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor drew Senate’s specific attention to the following:

- the incorporation of written comments from Senate members following the last meeting;
- removal of specificity around departmental roles that might be considered under the heading of academic citizenship;
- detailed discussion of the criteria with UCU representatives;
- possible future submission to Senate of amendments arising from the experience of implementing the new arrangements.

During discussion the following comments were noted:

(a) As regards the unchanged process whereby applicants could apply for promotion to either Reader or Professor or both, it was noted that the process involved taking advice from the relevant mentor or Head of Department (HoD) on the most suitable submission.
(b) The guidance that the list of colleagues consulted by the HoD should be circulated to academic staff in the department was intended to ensure transparency and openness as regards the individuals involved in the process at departmental level.

(c) The guidance for applicants on reporting concerns that a particular referee might be unsound was rarely required but did provide protection in exceptional cases.

(d) It was confirmed that six referees were now required for professorial promotions and that the Professor title would be awarded without any additional indicator for staff on teaching-only contracts.

(e) General briefings would be provided for potential applicants, with further briefings in individual departments as necessary.

(f) It was agreed that all protected characteristics needed to be considered to promote equality and diversity.

(g) It was agreed that research reports should be included in the list of research outputs recognised by the University (§2.1 refers).

(h) It was suggested that for greater clarity the final paragraph of general principles (p2) should run on as paragraph (d) of the preceding list of changes.

(i) It was suggested that the wording of the foot-note regarding Level 2 of Academic Citizenship (p16) might usefully be clarified further as regards expectations of candidates for promotion to Professor.

(j) It was agreed that evidence of effective leadership within the department as a requirement for promotion to Reader/Professor should be re-worded as “within the institution”.

(k) It was agreed that the new titles set out in the criteria should be applied to successful candidates in the current promotion round (M14-15/71* below refers) and to new advertised posts.

Subject to the comments above, Senate approved the new promotions criteria for implementation in the next round of applications.
Noting the considerable work undertaken by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor to consult widely with colleagues and refine the wording of the criteria, the Vice-Chancellor offered thanks and congratulations to Dr Grenville on behalf of Senate.

14-15/57 Student Representation on Senate

Further to M14-15/43 (Student Representation on Senate), Senate considered a re-drafted proposal (S.14-15/43) presented by the new SU President that:

- the SU Academic Officer, currently in attendance, become a full member of Senate;
- the three undergraduate representatives currently elected by and from all registered students be replaced by three departmental representatives elected by and from the departmental representatives in each faculty;
- the one graduate representative currently elected by and from all members of the Graduate Students’ Association (GSA) be replaced by a graduate representative elected by and from the GSA Council.

During discussion the following points were noted:

(a) The proposed new wording for Statute 12.1.k was unchanged from the current wording as regards the graduate representative, and as such did not accurately reflect the proposal before Senate.

(b) It was confirmed that the three faculty representatives would be chosen by an election involving the SU President, the SU Academic Officer and the departmental representatives in each faculty (as stated in the proposed revised wording of Regulation 9.2).

(c) The additional proposal (not referenced in the cover-note) that the SU President would nominate a member of YUSU staff to accompany elected student representatives as an observer at Senate meetings was intended to provide additional support and identify training needs for the student representatives.

(d) It was noted that the student representatives elected during the 2014/15 academic year would complete their current term of office until the end of Spring Term 2016, at which point three new faculty representatives would be elected under the new system.
Subject to the above comments and further clarification with the Registrar regarding the precise wording of the relevant statutes and regulations, Senate approved the proposal.

Statement by the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor reported the following matters:

- The majority Conservative government elected since the last meeting had a number of statements in its manifesto with implications for the HE sector, including in respect of student financing, student number controls, immigration and EU membership. The recent announcement of the ‘Northern Powerhouse’ also had implications for the University and the Minister responsible (James Wharton) had been approached with the argument that the concept needed to extend beyond the large metropolitan areas of the North. A sub-group of SMG had been established to undertake financial scenario-planning following the Emergency Budget on 8 July 2015, in particular to consider the impact of likely further cuts to the BIS budget.

- The first major speech by the new Minister for Universities and Science (Jo Johnson) had announced the introduction of a “Teaching Excellence Framework” (TEF). This new assessment of teaching quality was likely to be outcome-focused and involve some element of external review. There would be opportunities to shape the consultation on the proposal through sector bodies such as UUK and the Russell Group.

- Following the formation of a Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition in York City Council after the local election, a meeting had been held with the new council leader (Chris Steward) to discuss how the University and the City might work together.

- The University had dropped six places to 22nd in the latest Guardian league table, a disappointing result which would be addressed by continued focus on the key metrics of NSS performance and graduate employability. It was however noted that nine of the University’s twenty seven departments were in the top ten nationally in the Guardian table, while many competitor institutions occupied positions lower down its overall ranking.

- A fruitful University visit had been made to the United States, which had included alumni and fundraising events as well as discussions about
possible collaborations with Pennsylvania and Michigan State Universities.

- SMG had decided to introduce a voluntary severance scheme in order to help to address the current challenging financial situation. Applications would be based a business case demonstrating the department’s ability to absorb the costs of the severance package.

- The Quantum Communications Hub had opened on 4 June 2015 after the University had led a consortium bid for one of four hubs in the EPSRC’s new £155m National Network of Quantum Technology Hubs.

- Champions had been appointed for each of the seven themes in the new Research Strategy following an internal recruitment process in which the standard of applicants had been exceptionally high.

- Four York academics (David Wootton, Paul Johnson, Lorraine Talbot and Martin O’Neill) had been awarded prestigious Leverhulme Fellowships.

In response to specific queries from Senate members, the Vice-Chancellor commented further as follows:

- University overseas visits, such as the recent one to the US, involved staff from across different subject areas and sought to develop links with institutions that shared strengths with York.

- The sectoral response to the recent “TEF” announcement would involve presenting cogent evidence to government on the quality of teaching and would be linked to the current HEFCE consultation on a new approach to quality assessment.

- The sector was active in promoting the importance to UK HE of continued EU membership, with ongoing lobbying of ministers in both the UK and Brussels (led by the Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University, Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz). In terms of media penetration to influence the wider UK electorate, it was unlikely that HE would figure prominently in the debates leading up to the referendum.
Senate considered a proposed new performance review process for academic staff (S.14-15/46). The Director of HR attended the meeting for consideration of this item of business.

Introducing the proposed arrangements as Chair of the Performance Excellence Steering Group, the Vice-Chancellor commented that the previous process had been in place since 2004 and had required review in order to ensure consistency and equity of practice across all departments. A number of key features were highlighted in respect of timing, self-review, career development and agreement of annual objectives. Training for reviewers would be provided in the period July–December 2015 and moderation of objectives would be undertaken by Deans and Heads of Departments.

During discussion the following points were noted:

(a) Guidance would be provided to reviewees in the form of online information, FAQs etc.

(b) As regards consideration of student feedback, both reviewers and reviewees would be advised to consider modular feedback.

(c) The departmental performance profile to be collated by HoDs would in the first instance report on the proportions of staff in each achievement category, although this would eventually be developed into a more sophisticated performance assessment. The summary would also include space for HoDs to report on areas where previously identified objectives had been superceded.

(d) As regards potential concerns around confidentiality and the moderating role to be played by the Deans, it was reported that during the consultation process staff had requested wider involvement and scrutiny as a response to concerns about the potential for favouritism among some reviewers. Full information on the colleagues who would have sight of the forms would also be provided to reviewees at the outset.

(e) Given the timescales and staff numbers involved, the current review process for staff on fixed-term contracts would remain in place pro tem until the initial training for reviewers had been delivered. Following this interim phase, fixed-term staff, who were particularly numerous in the science departments, would be fully integrated into the new process.
(f) In response to a concern about the staff time involved in the new system and broader concerns about impingement on core academic functions of bureaucratic processes generally, it was suggested that the new arrangements should be viewed positively as supportive of career development and enhancement, which in turn related to the University’s duty as a responsible employer.

(g) In terms of the nomenclature used in the document, it was noted that this had been clarified in respect of post-docs as those staff on fixed-term contracts.

(h) As regards the four standard categories for evaluation of achievement, it was noted that these would be separately applied to the three core areas of teaching, research and academic citizenship. One of the roles of the moderators would be to ensure that a more standardised approach was adopted to the nature and number of annual objectives.

Following the above discussion, Senate approved the new performance review process for academic staff for implementation from the 2015/16 academic year. The Vice-Chancellor thanked UCU representatives for their valuable input to the shaping of the process and associated guidance.

14-15/60 Associate Deans (Research)

Senate received for information a report from the Deans on the creation of the roles of Associate Dean (Research) in each faculty (5.14-15/47).

It was noted that the new posts would support the Deans’ role in improving the linkage between the central administration and academic departments as this applied in the research context. The roles would be 0.4FTE and would be filled in an ex officio capacity in the Arts and Humanities by the Director of the Humanities Research Centre and in the Social Sciences by the Director of the Research Centre for Social Sciences.

The following points were noted in response to comments and queries from Senate members:

(a) As regards the types of previously-held senior role that might qualify a candidate for the role (e.g. Chair of Departmental Research Committee, membership of University Research Committee etc), it was agreed that
these were desirable rather than essential qualifications as the full range of experience would be considered at recruitment.

(b) Although not created at the same time as the approval of the new faculty structure earlier in the year, the new role was an example of a response to an emerging demand from academic departments (in this case to influence the research agenda at University level). As such the new posts did not represent a shifting or duplication of resource but rather added value to the new faculty structure in support of departments, taking on a role that time constraints currently prevented the Deans from fulfilling.

(c) As regards the suggestion that a similar role might be created on the teaching side, especially in the context of national developments in respect of teaching quality assurance and enhancement, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (T&L) reported that the University Teaching Committee was currently consulting on such matters. In terms of the resourcing emphasis at the University between teaching and research, it was suggested that the current investment in research activity and support was redressing a previous historical imbalance. It was also noted in this context that teaching excellence was duly recognised in the new promotions criteria.

Following the above discussion, Senate approved the associated recommendation that the constituency of the University Research Committee be amended to include the three Associate Deans (Research) as ex officio members.

14-15/61 Business from Committees

Senate noted and approved business from the following committee meetings (S.14-15/48):

- Teaching Committee: 14 May, 18 and 25 June 2015
- Research Committee: 21 April and 10 June 2015
- Planning Committee: 29 April and 3 June 2015
- Special Cases Committee: 19 June 2015
- HYMS Joint Senate Committee: 30 April 2015
- Arts & Humanities Faculty Board: 23 April 2015
- Sciences Faculty Board: 22 April 2015
- Social Sciences Faculty Board: 23 April 2015
Appointments to Committees

Further to M14-15/45, Senate approved the following appointments to committees (S.14-15/49):

**Academic Promotions Committee**
Dr Katie Slocombe (Psychology) [from 1 October 2015]

**Court**
Professor Karen Mumford (Economics)

**Council**
Dr Beatrice Szczepak Reed (Education)
Professor Ambrose Field (Music)
Professor Quentin Summerfield (Psychology)

**Health Safety and Welfare Committee**
Dr Moray Stark (Chemistry) (re-appointment)

**HYMS Joint Senate**
Professor Martin Chalkley (Centre for Health Economics)

**Planning Committee**
Professor Maria Goddard (Centre for Health Economics) (re-appointment for one year)

**Special Cases Committee**
Professor Mike Bentley (Physics) (re-appointment)
Dr Lynne Baxter (Management) (re-appointment)
Dr Jeremy Goldberg (History) (re-appointment)
Dr Barry Lee (Philosophy) (re-appointment)
Dr Fiona Polack (Computer Science) (re-appointment)
Dr Sarah Olive (Education)

**Student Experience Committee**
Professor Mike Bentley (Physics) (re-appointment)
Mrs Alison Foster-Lill (Health Sciences) (re-appointment)

**Teaching Committee**
Dr Emma Major (English)
Dr Lars Waldorf (Centre for Applied Human Rights)
Dr Katherine Selby (Environment) (re-appointment)
Senate also noted that the following had been elected in a ballot for membership of Research Committee:

Dr Mary Leng (Philosophy/Arts & Humanities)
Professor Bill McGuire (HYMS/Sciences)
Professor Nik Brown (Sociology/Social Sciences)

[All appointments for a period of three years from 1 August 2015 until 31 July 2018 unless otherwise stated.]

It was also noted that vacancies remained on the following committees:

- Court (three members of Senate)
- Special Cases Committee (four academic members)

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

14-15/63 Policy on Research Degrees

Senate approved amendments to the Policy on Research Degrees and associated amendments to University Regulations 2, 5 and 6, as proposed by the Graduate Research School Board (S.14-15/50).

14-15/64 Student Academic Appeal Procedures

Senate approved amendments to University Regulations 2.8 and 6.7, as proposed by the Special Cases Committee in response to the new Good Practice Framework published by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator in December 2014 (S.14-15/51).

14-15/65 Online Research Integrity Tutorial

Senate received for information a report from the Dean of the Graduate Research School on the new online research integrity tutorial for postgraduate research students (S.14-15/52).
14-15/66 Periodic Review Reports

Senate received for information periodic review reports in respect of the Departments of History, Environment and the Centre for Applied Human Rights (S.14-15/53).

14-15/67 Election of Academic Members

Senate received for information the result of the election of academic members to serve for three years from 1 August 2015 (S.14-15/54).

14-15/68 Dates of Meetings in 2015/16

The dates of Senate meetings in 2015/16 (all 3.15pm) were noted as follows:

- Tuesday 20 October 2015
- Tuesday 26 January 2016
- Tuesday 3 May 2016
- Tuesday 5 July 2016