Minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2018

Present: The Acting Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor D Smith
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning & Students), Professor J Robinson
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Partnerships & Knowledge Exchange), Professor J Timmis
Dean (Graduate Research School), Professor T Stoneham
The Director of Information Services, Mrs H Fraser-Krauss

Dr R Aitken
Professor T Andrews
Professor K Atkin
Professor N Audsley
Professor L Black
Professor D Brown
Professor D Bruce
Ms C Chamberlain (GSA)
Mr J Durcan (SU President)
Professor M Freeman
Professor M Goddard
Dr J de Groot
Mr J Hare (SU Academic Officer)

In attendance: Registrar & Secretary, Ms J Horsburgh (Secretary)
University Governance Officer, Dr P Evans (Assistant Secretary)
Planning & Governance Administrator, Ms B Carter Ellis
Vice-Chancellor’s Executive Officer, Mr I Wiggins

Apologies for absence were received from the Acting Dean (Arts & Humanities) Professor A Field, the Dean (Sciences) Professor B Fulton, Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning & Students) Professor T Lightfoot, Professor Y Birks, Professor M Burton, Dr T Cantrell, Ms Z Disley (student faculty rep), Professor M Freeman, Professor K Gibson, Professor M Goddard, Professor M Hodson, Professor J Hudson, Professor C Hunter, Ms R Khalil (student faculty rep), Dr S King, Professor U Macleod, Ms L Marrazzo (student faculty rep), Professor M Nazarov, Dr S Pauletto, Dr M Perry, Professor D Petrie, Professor G Richardson, Professor H Smith, Dr D Trenkic, Professor A Tyrrell and Professor M White.

Note: Before the formal meeting and further to M17-18/70 (Recruitment of next Vice-Chancellor), Perrett Laver (executive search firm) provided an update on the process to recruit the next Vice-Chancellor and undertook consultation with Senate members on the person specification for the role. The Acting Vice-Chancellor left the meeting during this discussion.

Senate: 12 November 2018
Membership

Senate noted its terms of reference as set out in the Charter/Statutes, ‘Statement of Primary Responsibilities’ and annual cycle of business (S.18-19/1). As it was the first meeting of the 2018/19 academic session, the Acting Vice-Chancellor welcomed new members.

Noting that the meeting had been postponed from its original date (16 October 2018) due to a major water leak on Campus West, the Acting Vice-Chancellor thanked the Registrar & Secretary and other relevant colleagues for their effective management of the incident.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2018 (S.18-19/2) were approved.

Policy for Handling Lost Credit

Further to M17-18/62 (Policy for Handling Lost Credit), Senate noted that a further report on this matter would be submitted to the next meeting following consideration of information from the Office for Students (OfS), the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and other institutions (S.17-18/3).

University Strategy

Further to M17-18/64 (University Strategy), the Acting Vice-Chancellor reported that at its recent Away Day the University Council had considered a document setting out the ongoing strategic projects that would continue to be implemented during the current period of Vice-Chancellor recruitment and pending the development of the University’s next strategic plan. It was noted that the document would be circulated to Senate for information and discussion at the next meeting.

Appointments to Committees

Further to M17-18/72 (Appointments to Committees), Senate noted the committee appointments approved by the Vice-Chancellor under Chair’s Action since the last meeting (S.18-19/4).

As regards approval of nominations from academic departments for honorary academic titles, the Acting Vice-Chancellor reported that due to long-term sickness absence the usual list had not been available for approval by Senate at this meeting. In order to avoid further delays in this matter, Senate therefore decided to delegate authority to the Acting Vice-Chancellor to approve these recommendations on its behalf.
Vice-Chancellor’s Report

[FOI exempt/commercially confidential]

National Student Survey 2018

Senate considered a report from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning & Students) on the 2018 National Student Survey (S.18-19/6).

Presenting the report, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (TLS) drew attention to the following aspects:

- inclusion in the report of all departmental commentaries as a means of sharing good practice;
- 3.8% decrease in Overall Satisfaction (to 84.61%) and decreases in all other dimensions;
- despite considerable improvements in a small number of departments, trend graphs confirming more departments declining than improving;
- analysis of negative student open comments to identify problem areas (e.g. academic unprofessionalism, insufficient academic support and contact time);
- comments from some students on the effect of the industrial action (despite lack of correlation across the sector between institutional levels of strike action and NSS outcomes);
- ongoing improvements in Assessment and Feedback, with more departments improving than declining in this dimension;
- planned continuation of the previous target for all departments (i.e. to be in the top half of the rankings across all ten dimensions);
- use of certain NSS metrics in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF);
- collaborative working between the Associate Deans and YUSU to improve scores for Student Voice;
- follow-up action-planning and monitoring by the Associate Deans with departments identified as requiring additional support (Archaeology, Computer Science, Economics, Education, Environment & Geography, Health Sciences, History, Language & Linguistic Science and Social Policy & Social Work);
- planned University Executive Board strategy session to develop a University-wide response to the 2018 outcome.

During discussion the following points were noted:

(a) A change by the OfS in the publication schedule of the NSS data had reduced the time for internal University analysis, which had impacted on the use of the data in some departments’ marketing materials (although a degree of caution was recommended in the development of marketing messages before the data had been fully understood).

(b) It was acknowledged that there was clear linkage between academic staff resources/workload and the student-facing elements of the survey, as had been confirmed in open comments from students. In the face of increasing, and
sometimes conflicting, demands on staff time, which could have an impact on completion of minor but nevertheless important tasks expected by students, it was agreed that it was important to streamline administrative processes accordingly.

(c) In terms of the shared responsibility for improvement between departments and the University, which it was suggested was under-emphasised in the current format of the annual report, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (TLS) drew attention to the partnership working with the Library and YUSU in dimensions such as Learning Resources and Student Voice. It was however acknowledged that, given the high degree of variability in outcomes, the key focus of the report had to be each department’s action-plan.

(d) As regards identifying demonstrably effective actions in response to under-performance, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (TLS) confirmed that past work with individual departments had confirmed this was possible, especially if supported by key individuals and groups such as Heads of Department and staff-student liaison committees. The Associate Deans were also developing processes for sharing best practice from high performing departments.

18-19/8 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2018

Senate considered a report on the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2018 (S.18-19/7).

Presenting the report, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (TLS) observed that the overall satisfaction score of 81% placed the University in the second quartile of the sector, with strong scores under the headings Retention and Dissertation but weaker performance for Employability and Skills Development. As regards the latter elements, it was reported that Careers were working with departments on this matter in the context of the programme learning outcomes for PGT awards identified in the institutional pedagogy.

The following points were noted in discussion:

(a) As regards the varied performance of departments with high proportions of international PGT students, it was noted that this variability seemed to arise more from subject-specific factors than from the student mix.

(b) The relatively low response rate of eligible students (30%, 1,014 participants) required the outcome to be viewed with some caution as regards drawing possible correlations and inferences from the data.

(c) Despite the relatively weaker reliability of the data compared to the NSS, follow-up work would nevertheless be undertaken with the departments performing less well than others.
18-19/9  Academic Quality Assurance Report

Senate considered the annual assurance report from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (TLS) on the quality of the student academic experience/outcomes and the reliability of degree standards (S.18-19/8), noting that the report had recently been considered by the University Council as the basis of its required annual accountability return on this matter to the OfS.

Noting that no comments on the report had been received from Senate members prior to its consideration by Council, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor reported that Council had decided on the basis of the report formally to authorise the Acting Vice-Chancellor as accountable officer to sign the required OfS assurance return (for submission by 3 December 2018).

The following points were noted in discussion:

(a) Close monitoring by UEB of staff:student ratios (SSRs) remained essential to delivery of a high quality student experience, a point that had also been made by Council at its recent meeting.

(b) The importance of having a clearly defined student experience strategy (Part B of the report refers) was emphasised.

(c) As regards the numbers of students enrolling on the University’s new online distance learning programmes (three new MSc programmes in Management), these aligned with the business plan for the first phase of the new initiative, with three additional programmes due to be launched by Computer Science from April 2019.

18-19/10  Destination of Leavers from Higher Education

Senate considered a report on the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education in 2016/17 (S.18-19/9).

Attending the meeting to present the report, the Director of Employability and Careers (Tom Banham) highlighted the following points:

☞ This would be the last such report as HESA moved to a new survey model (Graduate Outcomes) from late 2018.
☞ Despite the 0.5% increase in positive destinations (to 82%), the University’s relative ranking had dropped from 13th to 18th in the Russell Group following large increases across the sector. The University nevertheless performed well in those elements included in the TEF.
☞ Given the relatively high number of York graduates progressing to further study, the census date was important for capturing this positive outcome.
The percentage of York graduates from low HE participation areas (LPNs) achieving positive destinations was considerably higher than the sector and Russell Group averages (85.3%).

Degree classifications and placement years continued to have a significant positive impact on graduate destinations.

Senate noted the following points in discussion:

(a) As regards achieving an adequate response rate, this would become the responsibility of HESA to which the whole Graduate Outcomes survey was to be outsourced. Although HESA was aiming for a 65% response rate, this was thought to be optimistic, with considerable departmental variation also likely.

(b) The Employability Operations Group would give further consideration to the matter of census dates in the context of the completion deadlines for different University programmes and the four cohorts that would be surveyed annually.

(c) As regards the decline in the percentage of BME graduates achieving positive destinations (falling below the institutional average for all graduates), it was difficult to drawing clear conclusions as the reporting numbers were relatively low, in part due to the increased difficulty of surveying international students who had left the UK.

18-19/11 Regulation 12: Intellectual Property

Senate considered a revised version of University Regulation 12 (Intellectual Property) and an associated new Intellectual Property Disclosure and Exploitation Policy (S.18-19/10).

Presenting the revised regulation, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Partnerships & Knowledge Exchange) outlined the extensive consultation that had been undertaken with relevant groups and individuals, including UEB and Faculty Executive Groups. Senate also noted the clear rationale for the revisions as set out in the paper and the more generous disbursement of equity shares in spin-out companies for individual academics (rising from 40% to 75%).

During discussion the following points were noted:

(a) It was suggested that it would be useful to clarify that the regulation and associated policy document also applied to social enterprises and not-for-profit ventures.

(b) University ownership of material stored by lecture capture technology in the VLE would be clarified in section 12.2.2 of the revised Regulation.

(c) IP ownership among PhD students depended in part on whether the material had been developed as employees of the University (which was not the same as being
in receipt of a studentship). In some disciplines this would also include material that had been jointly created with others.

Subject to the points above and further consultation with the campus trade unions, Senate approved the revised Regulation 12 and associated IP policy.

18-19/12 League Table Rankings

Senate considered a report on the University’s latest league table rankings (S.18-19/11).

Attending the meeting to present the report, the Acting Head of the Business Intelligence Unit (Dan Cashdan) highlighted the following points:

- declines from 16th to 22nd position and from 20th to 21st position in the Times/Sunday Times and Complete University Guide respectively, with a rise from 17th to 12th in the Guardian ranking (aided by a new continuation metric);
- improvements in the THE World ranking (up from 137th to 119th) and QS World ranking (up from 135th to 134th);
- different methodologies and weightings used in the various league tables;
- piloting of new data analysis tools with selected departments in collaboration with Marketing.

The following points were noted in discussion:

(a) The replacement of the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS) with the Higher Education Classification of Subjects (HECOS) was likely to affect cohort size in some subject areas, with possible implications for league table position and the subject-level TEF. The transition would require further work with departments to ensure correct coding under the new system.

(b) Further analysis was required of the University’s decline in the value-added element of the Guardian table, which was moderated by entry tariff.

(c) The point made in other contexts about the importance of SSRs (M18-19/9 above also refers) had had an impact on the University’s performance in the QS World rankings (down 39 places on this indicator, which had a 20% weighting in the aggregated outcome).

18-19/13 Business from Committees

Senate noted and approved business from the following committee meetings (S.18-19/12):

- Teaching Committee: 4 October 2018
- Student Life Committee: 14 June 2018
- HYMS Joint Senate Committee: 25 July 2018
18-19/14 Periodic Review Reports

Senate received for information periodic review reports in respect of the Departments of Biology and Law (S.18-17/13).

18-19/15 Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 29 January 2019 at 2.15pm.